

Buckskin Trail Loop @ 1 mile round trip
40 foot Contour Intervals

WELCOME TO THE BUCKSKIN TRAIL!

This guide corresponds to numbered markers located between the trail head and bridge and within the loop. To use this guide, simply look for the numbered markers along the trail and match them to the numbered sections within the guide.

Discover unique plant adaptations that have made it possible for these plants to survive in extreme conditions and learn how these plants have been and still are an important resource for humans and wildlife.

Have fun and remember to:

- **Stay on the Trail!**
 - desert ecosystems are fragile and easily damaged.
- **Be Desert Smart!**
 - carry lots of water.
 - dress appropriately for weather conditions.
 - use sunscreen.
 - tell a friend where you are going and when you'll be back.

1. MESQUITE

One of the most common trees throughout the southwest deserts is the Mesquite. It's small compound leaves distinguish it as a member of the legume family that includes peas and beans. Small leaves are a desert adaptation: the larger the leaf the more water required to maintain it.



The fruit of the Mesquite is a nutritious bean that is eaten by coyotes, rodents, and other desert dwellers. The bean pods can be ground and made into flour or used to flavor meat by throwing a few on the fire of a grill. Natives used the mesquite for food, fuel, shelter, weapons, and medicine.

The Mesquite is also a good soil stabilizer. Its deep tap roots are capable of extending 60 feet in search of water.

2. DESERT HOLLY

Like many desert plants, Desert Holly has light colored leaves. Lighter colors reflect more sunlight (heat), reducing the amount of water the plant needs to cool itself.



The flowers of this saltbush may appear as early as February. Large, light green, somewhat succulent, disk-shaped fruit hangs on the female plants by late March and are a source of food for browsers. Later, the holly shaped leaves take on a pinkish tinge.

3. CREOSOTE BUSH

The Creosote Bush is one of the most successful and abundant shrubs of the southwest deserts. This shrub can clone itself by sending up new shoots from its root mass. This cloning adaptation has led to very long lived plants, with specimens found over 10,000 years old!



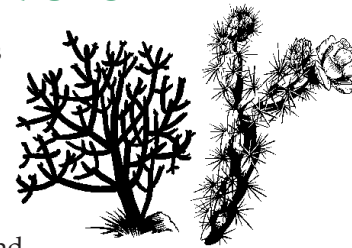
Another unique adaptation of the Creosote Bush is the sunscreen it produces for itself! A thick resin covers the leaves insulating them from sunlight. This same resin gives off a pungent odor when wet that many recognize as the "smell of the desert ."

Although unpalatable to most critters, the Creosote Bush Grasshopper dines solely on the foliage of the Creosote Bush.

Today some folk healers use an extract from the Creosote Bush as an ingredient in an herbal tea to treat coughs, arthritis and cancer, but scientists have not substantiated its effectiveness.

4. BUCKHORN CHOLLA

This cactus grows in cylinder shaped segments that are jointed like linked sausages. Like all cacti, Buckhorn Cholla has no true leaves and photosynthesizes (makes energy for growth) with its green stems.

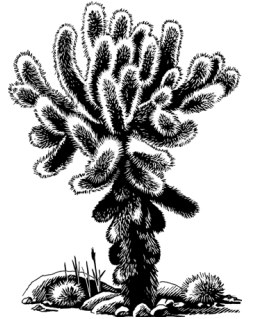


Wrens build their nests in the branches and ants collect nectar from special glands at the joints and on the flower buds.

The young tips or buds can be eaten and were an important food reserve for natives during severe droughts.

5. TEDDY BEAR CHOLLA

Teddy Bear Cholla, which gets its fuzzy appearance from spine encasing sheaths, is often referred to as "jumping cactus." The segmented joints detach easily and latch on to any passerby, human or animal, thus giving it the impression of jumping. This helps to continue the life of the cactus, as the dropped segments can re-root themselves wherever they land.

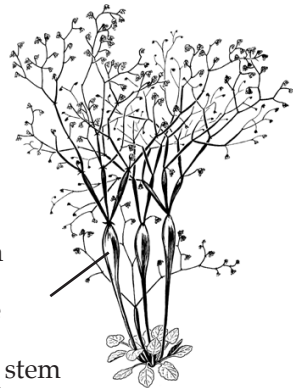


If you happen to have a segment attached to you, DO NOT remove it with your hand. Use a comb to get under the spines and gently scrape off.

Pack rats carry the fallen segments to their nests for camouflage and protection, while several desert creatures, including rodents and Desert Big Horn Sheep, depend on cactus fruit and pulp for food and water.

6. DESERT TRUMPET

Desert Trumpet is a member of the large buckwheat family. Small yellow flowers and the inflation of hollow leafless stems are noticeable characteristics of this interesting plant. Studies show a connection with stem inflations (bubbles) to minute larvae feeding on the stem. After leaving its secretion in the stem of the plant, the insect will exit through a small porthole.



Dry stems from the Desert Trumpet were used by some natives as tobacco pipes.

7. BRITTLEBUSH

A member of the sunflower family, Brittlebush is a short-lived, rounded shrub. Its leaves are not only light in color, but also have tiny hairs to further help cool the plant and reduce water loss. When in bloom, the leafless flower stems, with their bright yellow flowers, resemble a bouquet growing above the leaf area.

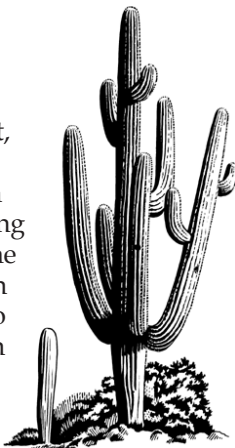


A sticky resin, secreted from the branches, was once chewed by Native Americans and used as incense in the churches of Baja California.

Small mammals and birds, especially quail, dine on the seeds produced by the Brittlebush.

8. SAGUARO

Surprisingly, for a plant that can reach a height of 50 feet, the Saguaro starts from a seed no bigger than a gnat (less than 2mm). In order to survive, young Saguaro plants must grow in the shade of a mature plant, known as a “nurse” plant. The Saguaro will eventually grow taller than and outlive the “nurse” plant.



The Saguaro is often referred to as a “cactus hotel.” Many animals, such as rodents, lizards, snakes, and birds, seek shelter in cavities made in the fleshy sides of the cactus by woodpeckers and flickers.

Large white flowers (Arizona’s State Flower) open up at night and are mostly pollinated by the long-nosed bat. The bright red, pulpy fruit is an important food and water source, helping wildlife survive the long drought between the winter rains and the late summer monsoons. For humans, the pulp can be eaten fresh or made into syrup, jelly or wine. The seeds are rich in oil and can be ground and eaten.

9. PALO VERDE

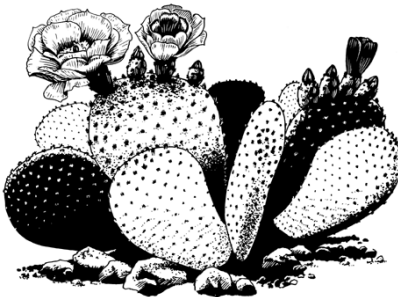
In Spanish, palo verde means “green stick.” The Palo Verde tree is adapted to low water desert conditions by bearing few leaves. Like cactus, photosynthesis is able to take place in the green branches and trunk.



Arizona’s State Tree, the Palo Verde, bears small yellow flowers that bees find very attractive. The beans are edible, as well as the twigs and pods, and serve as browse for wildlife and livestock.

10. BEAVERTAIL CACTUS

A member of the prickly pear family, Beavertail Cactus is easy to recognize by the shape of its pads (like a beaver tail). The blue-gray color of the pads is due to a thick layer of wax which covers the pad, protecting it from water loss. Besides photosynthesizing, the pads also store water and produce flowers. The brilliant magenta colored flowers can be viewed from February until June.

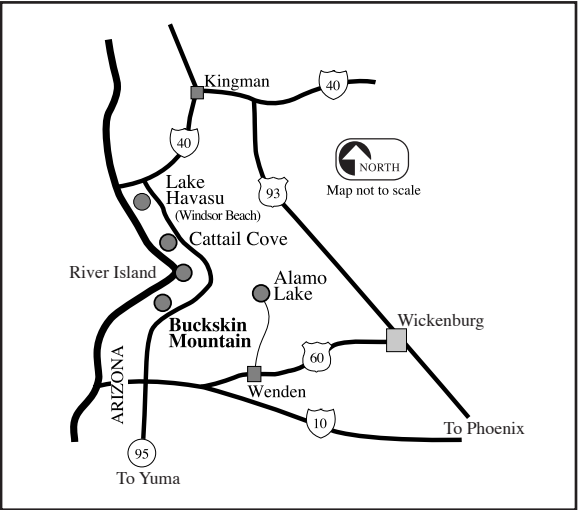


The fruit is juicy and edible when ripe. Javelina, a mammal whose appearance resembles a pig, eats the fleshy insides of the pads by stripping away the spines and tough waxy coating with its tusks.

We Hope You Enjoyed The Buckskin Trail!
If you do not plan to use this guide again,
please help us recycle and return it to the
box at the trail head.

Thank You.

LOCATION:
The park is located on Highway 95,
11 miles north of Parker.



Arizona State Parks Mission
“Managing and conserving Arizona’s natural, cultural, and recreational resources for the benefit of the people, both in our Parks and through our Partners.”

Buckskin Mountain State Park
5476 Highway 95
Parker, Arizona 85344
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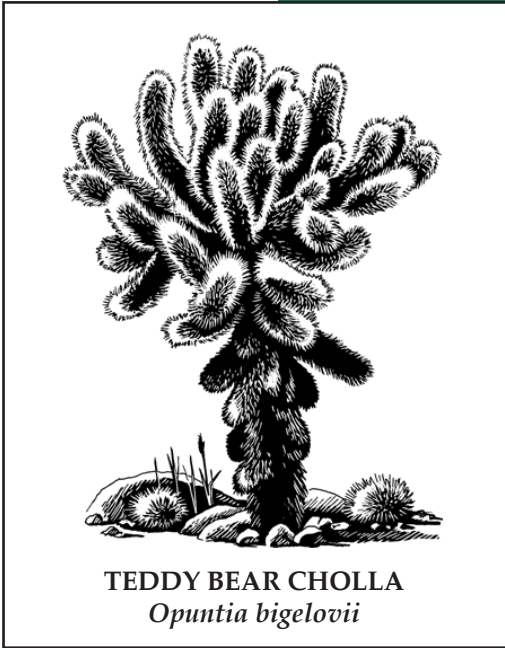


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**Buckskin Mountain
State Park**

The Buckskin Trail
**A Look at
Desert Vegetation**



**A guide to the
plants along the
Buckskin Trail
Loop**